WEDNESDAY, MAR. 12, 1941

Rawsonville, Mich., Mar. 12—Wilmer H. Corkins, who is the retiring highway commissioner of Ypsilanti Township, holds somewhat of a record as to number of years service. Mr. Corkins was first elected to the office in April, 1918, and has been reelected each year since that time. He has seen many changes in the township both in population and the original roads. Many farms have been subdivided and dozens of new houses have been erected. Many new roads have been built and some old roads have been discontinued. The most important being the old Tuttle Hill Rd. across the Huron River from the north River Rd. to the south River Rd. or more recently named the Huron River Dr.

In 1918 the township system was somewhat different than it is today, as the highways were taken care of entirely by the township, excepting Michigan Ave, a state road. Under the old system road warrants were made out for each road district which then numbered 37. These warrants contained the name of the property owners, number of acres and valuation of property, and the amount of the road tax which had previously been determined at the town meeting. A pathmaster was appointed in each road district and it was his duty to notify the property owners of the amount of their road tax and allow them to work if they wished, all work, of course, under supervision of the commissioner. At that time there were no subdivisions in the township.

There were two funds to draw from for work on the highways; the highway improvement, from which money was drawn for buying gravel, culverts and bridges, and the road repair fund from which money was drawn for labor.

During a spring freshet in 1918 the Lowell bridge across the Huron River collapsed when one abutment washed out. At the same time the bridge at the Paper Mill washed out. Lowell bridge was repaired and a new bridge at Paper Mill was built by the Township and City of Ypsilanti.

About 15 years ago a road grader, purchased by the township, eliminated much of the work that was formerly done with teams, and far more work could be accomplished in less time.

In 1925 the Rawsonville bridge over the river was raised four feet to allow more water flowage after the dam at French Landing was built by the Edison Company.

Practically all land was donated to the township for the extension of the Wiard Rd. from Tyler Rd. to the North River or now known as the Ford Dam Rd. As this road led through a wooded area it was necessary to cut down trees, blast stumps and draw gravel to form the road bed. This was about 15 years ago.

In 1931-'32 the Ford Dam and power plant was built a half mile west of Rawsonville, necessitating the opening of a road which merely connects the north and south River Rds. However, this road was built and donated by the Ford Motor Company. The Tuttle Bridge was dismantled of planks and steel stringers and the skeleton of the bridge, with the aid of the wind and an ice jam, finally toppled into the river.

The Virginia highway, at the west city limits of Ypsilanti which connects the Paper Mill Rd. with Washtenaw Ave., is one of the few roads to be given a right of way across a railroad. Permission was obtained from the Michigan Public Utilities Commission of Lansing and $1,000 had to be deposited in a bank to the Lake Shore Railroad for its perpetual maintenance. Many other attempts to gain a right of way over a railroad have been made but without success.

WILMER H. CORKINS

On April 20, 1936, one span of the Rawsonville bridge collapsed and fell in the river. A new and shorter bridge was built. It is on the Wayne-Washtenaw line.

Mr. Corkins had charge of many welfare workers during the depression at which time the roadsides and ditches were cleared of brush. Another of his regular duties was to settle disputes over line fen

As the population increased more land was subdivided and the number of subdivisions in the township reached over 60.

As the number of property owners increased the system of road warrants was abolished and the work was under the direct supervision of the commissioner.

Another new system was the taking over of the township roads by the county over a period of about six years. There were 93 miles of township roads and a portion was taken over each year.

Three gravel pits were bought or leased for the township.

Mr. Corkins worked under three supervisors, Luman Seamans, D. Z. Curtiss and E. D. Foster, and during his years of service has had the fine cooperation of the township board at all times. He has requested that his name be omitted from the ballot this year.

Mr. Corkins is now employed at the Burrell Brothers Granite Works, Ypsilanti.